

# Blind Date Gone

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An informal survey of squadron personnel revealed that most have fire extinguishers in their house. Good news, right?

Maybe not. Many of those who claimed to have a fire extinguisher in their home were not sure of its location. That's not good news.

OK, you say you know where yours is. Maybe you're even proud that you keep it in the kitchen—the origin of the vast majority of house fires. But before you pat yourself on the back, read on.

An anonymous service member was heating oil in a large pan. He was preparing a gourmet feast for his soon-to-arrive blind date. While he waited for the oil to reach the proper temperature, he prepared other foods in the kitchen (*you thought he was going to leave the kitchen to answer the door, didn't you?*). The sound of splattering oil caught his attention, and he turned to assess the situation. Unconcerned, he reached over to turn down the heat on the burner. A knock came on the window (*yes, it was his date—you see, the kitchen window was right next to the front door, and his date decided to be playful*).

Startled, our Romeo bumped into the handle of the pan, and oil spilled onto the hot stove. Flames—big ones—immediately erupted. The top to the pan wasn't nearby, so he reached for the fire extinguisher. Unfortunately, the raging stove stood in his way—the extinguisher was on the floor, in the space between the range and a wall. It was too close to the flames to reach safely.

Quick reanalysis of the rapidly deteriorating situation led him to Plan B: Find some salt or baking soda to throw on the fire. Unfortunately (*there's that word again*), the flames

had spread to the curtains on an adjacent window (*yes, his date still was standing in the window!*), and he didn't think he could find enough agent to extinguish the fire.

Time for Plan C (*this guy's pretty good under fire*). He remembered there was another fire extinguisher in the garage, and, within 30 seconds (*any longer, and he should have called 911*), the fire was out. The only damage was a scorched stovetop, one crispy curtain, and some scorch marks on the wall around the window.

Let's review our Romeo's performance (*and what a performance it was!*). He could have supervised his pan more carefully, but we'll give him a little credit for not leaving the kitchen unattended. If the top to the pan had been handy, he could have used it to stop the splattering oil or to smother the flames. Romeo does get bonus points for having a fire extinguisher in the kitchen, but those points are taken off for its poor placement.

Remember, always put your fire extinguisher near but not adjacent to the likely sources of fire. It could mean the difference between putting out an unpredictable stovetop fire in seconds, instead of watching from your backyard while the fire department sprays water on your house from a very large hose. And, if you don't have a fire extinguisher in your residence, get one—yesterday. While you're out, get new batteries for your smoke alarms.

What about the blind date? Well, she was impressed with his cool performance under pressure, helped him clean up the kitchen, and offered to pay for dinner—in a restaurant.

# Worse

## Reducing the Risk of Kitchen Fires

The kitchen is a relatively safe place, but it contains many elements that can lead to household accidents. Here are some things you can do to minimize fire-safety hazards in the kitchen:

- Regularly check pilot lights.
- Clean up accumulated grease.
- Don't smoke in the area.
- Know the location, type and purpose of your fire extinguisher.
- Avoid wearing loose clothing that can get caught in flames or appliances.
- Use salt or baking soda to put out small flames. If anyone's clothing should catch fire, the rule is: Stop, drop and roll.
- Keep the handles of pots and pans pointed toward the back of the stovetop.
- When using a gas stove, turn off the flame before stirring, turning or flipping food. Turn it back on when you're finished. If the stove is electric, warn children that it will stay hot, even after it has been turned off.
- Don't let anyone but adults put things in an oven or take them out.
- Never leave a child alone when cooking or when an electrical appliance is within reach.
- Talk to children about precautions in simple, clear terms. Young children need frequent reminders.
- Never leave appliance cords hanging from counter tops.
- Remember the acronym "PASS:" P - pull the pin, A - aim extinguisher nozzle at the base of the flames, S - squeeze trigger while holding the extinguisher upright, S - sweep the extinguisher from side to side, covering the area of the fire with the extinguishing agent. 

